

State of Alaska
Department of Law

Gregg D. Renkes
Attorney General
P.O. Box 110300
Juneau, Alaska 99811
NEWS RELEASE



Press Contact: Andrea Russell

907-465-6250
FAX: 907-465-6270
www.law.state.ak.us

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Bootlegger Ronald Peltola Receives 16-Month Sentence

(Juneau, AK) - Bethel resident Ronald Peltola was sentenced Monday to 16 months of jail, fined \$5,000, and forfeited his truck after pleading to felony bootlegging. Peltola could serve an additional (18) eighteen months in jail if he violates probation over the next three years. Peltola admitted selling vodka for \$60 a bottle in the "damp" community of Bethel. Superior Court Judge Richard Savell focused on deterrence of other would-be bootleggers, saying that these crimes are "consciously undertaken and can be deterred" despite the "proliferation common to the Delta."

"This conviction and sentence highlights the excellent work of Assistant Attorney General Andrea Russell and to our aggressive program of dedicating prosecutors and law enforcement to our statewide anti-bootlegging effort," said Attorney General Gregg Renkes.

"These communities have voted to restrict access to alcohol to protect themselves from the rural epidemic of alcohol-related crimes," said General Renkes. "Bootleggers are motivated by the high profit margins and don't care that every bottle sold may be the triggering factor in an assault, rape or murder. Sentences like this send a clear message that bootleggers will eventually be caught and will pay a high price."

Alaska State Troopers in the WAANT Unit (Western Alaska Alcohol and Narcotics Team) made tape recordings of five separate transactions in which Peltola sold 750 ml bottles of vodka for \$60 each, which Peltola described on the tapes as the going rate. When Peltola was arrested he was found with the "buy money" that was identified with recorded serial numbers. Another bootlegging charge was brought against Peltola when more than 15 liters of hard liquor was found at his home – more than enough under Alaska law to show an intent to sell the liquor. Peltola was on bail release in a Fish & Game criminal case at the time.

In August, Peltola was sentenced to 40 days in jail, and the forfeit of his boat, airplane and nearly \$13,000 for his convictions for illegal guiding, unlawful possession and transportation of illegally taken game, and unlawful methods of taking big game animals.

For a copy of public record documents related to this case, please contact paralegal Cynthia Bradford at (907) 269-6250.

With regard to any charges which may be noted in this press release, please note that "the charge is merely an accusation and that the defendant(s) is/are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty." Rule 3.6(b)(6), Alaska Rules of Professional Conduct.